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SUBJECT: ROMANIAN PRESIDENT, PRIME MINISTER, AND PARLIAMENT  
AGREE: NO TO RECOGNIZING KOSOVO INDEPENDENCE

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: In a rare display of political unanimity, President Traian Basescu, Prime Minister Tariceanu, and Parliament met in joint session February 18 declare formally that Romania will not recognize Kosovo's independence. Almost all parties--with the exception of the ethnic Hungarian UDMR--also issued public statements endorsing Romania's official position. Right-extremist and mainstream parties alike have urged PM Tariceanu to expel the UDMR from the current coalition government. The episode underscores that persuading Romanian authorities to change their "non-recognition" position will be an uphill battle, especially in the run-up to the election campaign later this year. End summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) In a joint session February 18, parliament approved a resolution declaring that Romania will not recognize Kosovo independence. The resolution passed with the support of all parliamentary parties with the exception of the ethnic Hungarian Democratic Union of Hungarians from Romania (UDMR). The declaration also expresses "deep concern" over the "unilateral proclamation" of the independence of the Kosovo province and stresses that the decision in Pristina and the potential recognition by other states of the unilaterally declared independence must not set a precedent for other areas.

[1](#)3. (SBU) In a speech before Parliament, PM Calin Popescu-Tariceanu insisted that the decision of the Kosovar authorities should not be seen as implying that international law somehow provides collective rights for national minorities or any rights to self-determination and secession. Tariceanu also noted that EU continues to back the UN Charter and the Helsinki final act, which enshrines the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Prime Minister also noted that his government, the parliament and the President shared a common position on this issue, demonstrating the "solid functioning" of Romanian democracy and its institutions.

[1](#)4. (SBU) President Traian Basescu in a press conference after his meeting with leaders of parliamentary parties outlined the reasons why Romania will not recognize Kosovo's independence, including, inter alia: the absence of a UNSC resolution on the status of Kosovo; absence of an agreement between Serbs and Kosovars on this issue; Romania's principled objection to the granting of "collective rights" to ethnic minorities; and the international community's "infringement" of Serbia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Basescu stressed that Romania's position on Kosovo was well known since 2005, and that he had reiterated these points publicly during two visits to the United States. In this context, he said, the existence of a strategic partnership with the United States should not prevent Romania from adopting contrary positions when the country is obliged

to defend its national interest. Basescu also announced that the Foreign Ministry will cease all activities of its office in Pristina.

15. (SBU) The only mainstream political party that welcomed the decision of the Kosovar authorities was the ethnic Hungarian UDMR, which urged Romanian authorities to recognize Kosovo's independence. In a press release February 17, the UDMR noted that Kosovo's declaration of independence was a natural consequence of the restructuring process that had taken place over the past decade in Central Europe and Western Balkans. The UDMR noted that two World Wars broke out in Europe because of unresolved ethnic and national tensions, and urged authorities not to delay the recognition of the newly formed state. The UDMR statement also stressed that the European countries' search for solutions in Kosovo had "created a precedent.<sup>8</sup> Other Romanian parties disavowed the UDMR position and urged the Prime Minister to eject the UDMR from his government. (Note: Removing the UDMR from the current Tariceanu cabinet is unlikely, since it would lead automatically to a vote of confidence and probably to election of a new Prime Minister.)

16. (SBU) Mainstream press comments also evinced criticism of Kosovo's proclamation of independence, with a headline in the independent centrist daily "Ziua" reading "Kosovo is Born; the UN is Dead." The article noted that in the final analysis, both the international legal framework and the UN counted less than the support of "powerful" countries, and predicted that the Republic of Kosovo will not be an end, but an unhappy prelude. Similarly, the independent daily "Cotidianul" in a headline reading "A Kosovo in Transylvania" evinced concerns that Kosovo could become a precedent for separatist solutions in Cyprus, Nagorno-Karabakh, and even Transylvania.

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17. (SBU) Comment: Opposition to Kosovo's independence is a touchstone for most mainstream (and right-extremist) political parties. Given the upcoming electoral campaign, the nationalist stance of most of the mainstream Romanian parties is not unexpected, as political parties seek to appeal to a nationalist electorate that has perennially confronted the ghost of ethnic Hungarian secessionism. The near-unanimity of all mainstream political actors on this issue underscores that getting Romania to move from its non-recognition stance regarding an independent Kosovo will be an uphill challenge. End Comment.  
TAUBMAN